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Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

Note verbale dated 3 July 2000 from the Permanent Mission of South Africa to the United Nations (Vienna) addressed to the Secretary-General

1. The Permanent Mission of South Africa to the United Nations (Vienna) presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and, in accordance with article 5, paragraph 1, of the 1968 Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Space Objects Launched into Outer Space (General Assembly resolution 2345 (XXII), annex), wishes to notify the Secretary-General that three space objects have been discovered on South African territory. The objects were found in Durbanville, Worcester and Robertson, respectively, in the Western Cape Province of South Africa, on 27 April 2000.

2. The first object is a cylindrical steel vessel 2.7 metres long and 1.5 metres in diameter weighing 260 kilograms. The second object is a spherical metal object 60 centimetres in diameter and weighs approximately 33 kilograms. The third is a tapered, cylindrical and pipe-like object made from non-metallic, probably composite materials. It is approximately 60 centimetres long, 30 centimetres in diameter at "base" and 20 centimetres at "apex" and weighs approximately 30 kilograms. Preliminary investigations, in conjunction with Nicholas L. Johnston, Chief Scientist and Program Manager of the Orbital Debris Program Office at the Johnson Space Center of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration of the United States of America, revealed that the objects were believed to be component parts of a DELTA II second stage rocket used to launch a United States Global Positioning System (GPS) satellite on 28 March 1996. An investigation concluded that the objects posed no risk of hazards to people and property, and were being kept by the South African Astronomical Observatory in Cape Town.

3. In accordance with article 5, paragraph 1, of the 1968 Agreement, the Government of South Africa is also notifying the Government of the United States of America.

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4. The Permanent Mission of South Africa further has the honour to request that the present communication be circulated to Member States as an official document of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.